Transgender Awareness Week: Celebrating Transgender Achievements in Gaming

Community NerdyBirdy Nov 22, 2021

Last week was Transgender Awareness Week, a time not only to celebrate the achievements of the transgender community, but also to draw awareness to the challenges and struggles that transgender people still face. Each year, Transgender Awareness Week culminates in International Transgender Remembrance Day, an official holiday to observe and memorialize those who have been murdered because of transphobia. It is also a day to draw attention to and awareness of the continued violence against transgender people.

Diversity and inclusion lie at the heart of everything we do as Xbox Ambassadors. We fervently believe that providing a safe arena for gaming and friendly competition benefits us all. We're convinced that diversity in gaming should be encouraged not only for the obvious social and moral reasons, but because embracing differences in people, perspectives and points of view makes gaming a better place.

Our contemporary world is a time of great social change and redefinition. Movements supporting the inclusion of communities such as LGBTQIA+ groups have achieved widespread acceptance and support. And yet many still face significant hardship and barriers such as discrimination, harassment, and violence.

As Xbox Ambassadors, we recognize that supporting and assisting the transgender community is a responsibility for each of us. In honor of last week's mission, we've highlighted the many achievements and successes of transgender people in gaming and the Xbox community.

Progress and New Perspectives

A promising bright spot in gaming is the widespread growth of representation of historically marginalized communities. Gaming is undeniably more representative of our current nation than it was twenty or even ten years ago. The transgender community is no exception to this.

Representation of transgender characters in video games has increased dramatically in the last decade. From Krem the mercenary in *Dragon Age: Inquisition*, to the inclusion of Lev in *The Last of Us Part II*, transgender characters have become a fixture in some of the industry's most acclaimed games.

This has extended to the teams responsible for writing, designing, developing, and producing games. Transgender and gender diverse writers, designers, and developers such as Maize Wallin, Juno McClure, Luke Ryan, and Henco Joubert have released or are currently working on unique games that reflect their lived experiences and worldview. And several transgender developers such as Sandra Molina and Maddy Thorson have gone on to achieve widespread success with their own games.

Image: Sandra Molina Juan

Sandra Molina's *The Hayseed Knight* takes the player on an original journey through history to show how multiple perspectives can dramatically change the direction of a retelling or narrative of events. Molina was widely praised for the game's graphic novel-inspired visuals and fun and unpredictable storytelling.

Maddy Thorson's *Celeste* is widely considered to be one of the best games released in 2018. Centering on the story of Madeline, a young woman climbing Celeste Mountain, *Celeste* won Best Independent Game and was nominated for Game of the Year at The Game Awards in 2018. Director and writer Maddy Thorson has since confirmed that Madeline is a trans woman, and that *Celeste* was based on Thorson's own experience with realizing her gender identity.

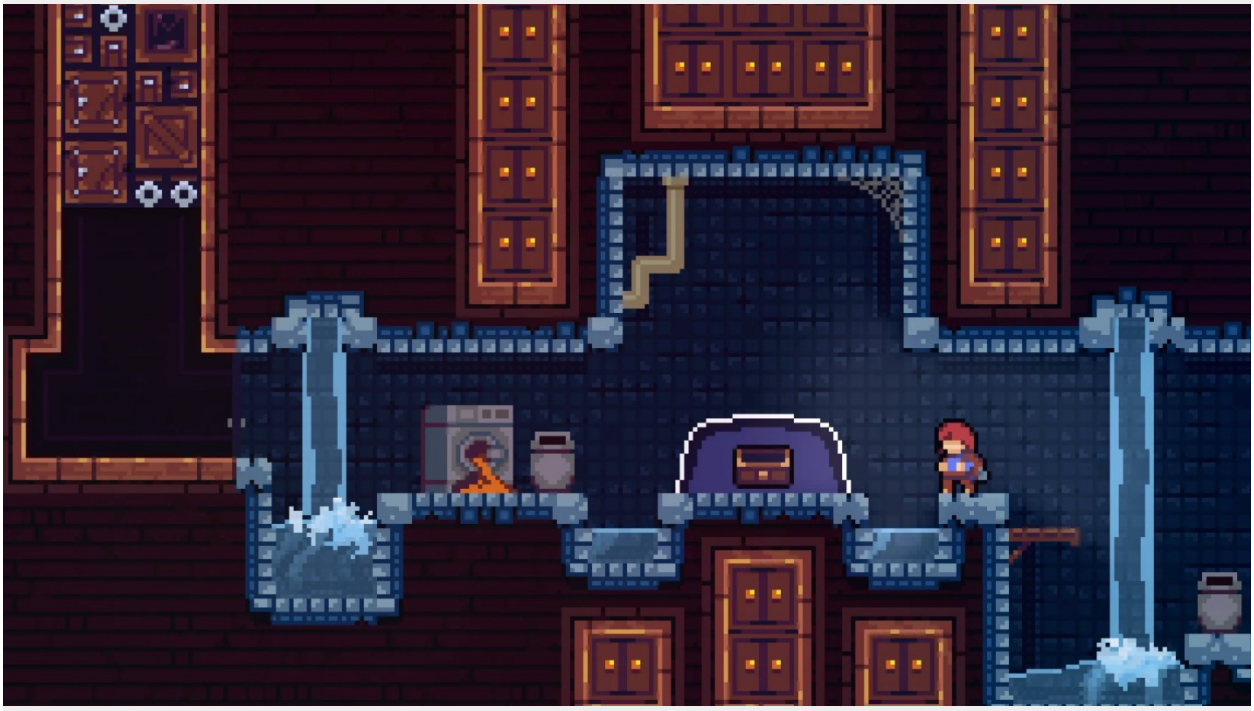

Image: Matt Makes Games

Finding Strength in Diversity

As Xbox Ambassadors, we know that when everyone plays, we all win. That's not just a slogan, it's an ethos that inspires our entire program. Gaming is for everyone, and we understand that when gaming is inclusive, accessible, and safe, that creativity, artistry, and imagination flourishes. We realize that

diversity is a strength, and that difference can lead to learning, growth, and exploration.

As we observe and celebrate this year’s Transgender Awareness Week, we call on all gamers to strive to support and foster an encouraging, welcoming, and inclusive gaming community.